



SEN. HUGH SCOTT
... "honest appraisal"

Scott Details President's Final Days

As President Nixon edged toward a decision to resign last week, key members of Congress and White House aides pursued a delicate psychological strategy to ensure that he would not back away at the last minute, Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott said yesterday.

Scott said White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. cautioned key congressional leaders not to press resignation on the President, fearing it might simply reinforce his determination to stay on.

Recounting those critical last days, Scott said the President "was leaning toward resignation but had not been able to reach that point."

The President was eventually guided to the final decision by Haig, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and three members of Congress.

Last Wednesday, as Mr. Nixon's congressional support collapsed after release of the latest round of Watergate tapes, Scott went to the White House with the other two, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) and House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.).

They told Mr. Nixon that his situation in Congress was virtually hopeless. But following Haig's advice, they did not ask that he resign.

Before the crucial meeting, Scott said, White House

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aide William Timmons called to ask that resignation not be discussed.

Then, Scott recalled, at a White House briefing "Haig again said, 'We wish you would not suggest resignation... he is almost on the edge of resignation and if you suggest it he may take umbrage and reverse field here.'"

Scott said Haig repeated earlier statements about the tremendous strain Mr. Nixon was undergoing.

But at the Wednesday meeting, Scott recalled, the President appeared serene, propping his feet on the desk, joking that he would become the only living ex-President. Scott recalled the President as saying: "Poor old Harry Truman is gone and I wouldn't have anybody to pal around with."

Goldwater, quoted yesterday by United Press International, said President Nixon made up his own mind to resign from office. "I think the family represented the biggest obstacle," he said.

"Frankly, I did not think he would do it," Goldwater said. "I know him too well. He's mule-headed."

Haig was reported by UPI as being "highly incensed" at charges that he played a key role in the resignation drama, calling them "totally inaccurate."

Scott said that presidential lawyer James D. St. Clair had told him Monday that he threatened to quit unless the President released the latest tapes. "So things were pretty bad down there," the senator added.

"So when we got down there we had agreed not to ask the President for his resignation. We had been his friends and supporters. We were not there to deliver a coup de grace. We were there to give him an honest, objective appraisal that his case was hopeless and that it was in the interests of the nation that he step down."

Scott appeared on the TV program "Face the Nation" (CBS, WTOP.)

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported yesterday that three of Mr. Nixon's top aides—Haig, St. Clair, and J. Fred Buzhardt—threatened last Monday to quit if he did not turn over the most recent tape transcripts.

The Inquirer said Haig, St. Clair and Buzhardt told Mr. Nixon, "gently but firmly that they and the entire legal staff were about to quit." The article said that, on the previous Friday, St. Clair had listened to the

tapes of Mr. Nixon's conversations with former White House aide H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and was "deeply shocked" and "hurt" by what he heard, having unwittingly deceived the courts.

Scott predicted that President Ford will lead the GOP ticket in 1976, despite Mr. Ford's earlier statements that he was not interested in running for the presidency.

"Conditions may force him to run," Scott said. "I rather think he will run... I think the party will force it."

Scott said the former President should not be prosecuted for possible Watergate crimes: "Hanging is enough without drawing and quartering," Scott said. "In my judgment, Dick Nixon could not get a fair trial — and especially not in the District of Columbia."

Sen. Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.), assistant Senate minority leader, agreed, on "Issues and Answers" (ABC, WMAL) that Mr. Nixon should not have to face further Watergate prosecution.

Both Scott and Griffin said Republican prospects for the coming congressional elections have improved with the ascension of Mr. Ford to the presidency. "The sun is over the mountains and reaching into the valleys," Scott said.

Scott expressed support for former New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller as a choice for the vice presidency in the Ford administration.

He said reported opposition to Rockefeller is "grossly exaggerated."

"I think when you speak of opposition of an ideological character its' forgotten how conservative Gov. Rockefeller is in the first place," he said. Scott listed several possible vice presidential possibilities, including GOP chairman George Bush, Gov. Dan Evans of Washington, Gov. Christopher Bond of Missouri, and Sens. Goldwater, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, John Tower of Texas, Bob Dole of Kansas, Howard Baker and William E. Brock of Tennessee and Peter Dominick of Colorado.

— Tim O'Brien